

Getting Support to Lose Weight and Get Fit

A strong support system can help you keep your resolutions to drop pounds and shape up. Find out who should — and shouldn't! — be on your team.

Everyday Health: What kind of support should you seek to help you achieve your goals?



Anita Gadhia-Smith, PsyD (fromaddictiontorecovery.com)

Seek support from individuals and groups who are working on the same issues, as well as from professionals. Seek out people who have already accomplished what you want and learn what worked for them.



Ed DeBellis, PsyD (debellistherapy.com)

If you find that you need support, you should talk to your physician first to rule out any rare medical explanation for your weight issue. If you need help with what to eat, you can consult a licensed nutritionist. If you feel that there are psychological issues causing problematic eating, you can consult a licensed mental health professional who specializes in eating issues. Support groups can help you stay motivated by helping you to feel accountable. Diets and weight-loss programs that dictate or provide what you eat tend to fail in the long run because people are not likely to continue eating those foods after they reach their goals.



Karen R. Koenig, LCSW, MEd (eatingnormal.com)

Groups are wonderful for motivation and support but they have to be composed of like-minded people. I'm all for support groups that talk about emotional eating and changing behavior, and against groups that have rigid rules or weigh-ins. Support should focus on eating, not weight.

I also believe that anyone who's been struggling for more than a few years to lose weight and hasn't succeeded, or who has slimmed down and then grown heavier more than once, should seek out a therapist who specializes in eating problems or eating disorders for effective help. It's

characteristic of disregulated eaters that they turn to food rather than people, are ashamed to ask for help, and feel they have to resolve their problems on their own. Support helps tremendously, but it has to be the right kind that builds accountability to yourself, not to others.



Roger Gould, MD (shrinkyourself.com)

Surround yourself with people who support healthy eating, enjoy eating right, and are proud of making good food choices. A good weight-loss partner who thinks the way you do can be very useful. The most important support people are those who respect your need to make the decisions, including indulging on special occasions without feeling guilty or like a failure. Stay away from those who want to tell you what to do.



Donna P. Feldman, MS, RD (radionutrition.com)

Nutrition consultant

State your goal as "eating healthier" to family, friends, and co-workers. Find others who share that goal, who will be supportive. It's better not to obsess about pounds and calories, as that can be off-putting to everyone else. If there are people in your life who seem to be sabotaging your efforts, recognize that and deal with it appropriately (speak out, keep your distance, politely decline offers of tempting foods).



Tosca Reno (toscareno.com, eatcleandiet.com)

It depends. If you don't know your way around a gym you may want to hire a personal trainer, at least for a few sessions to show you the ropes. If you are an emotional or binge eater, you may want to talk to a professional who can help you get to the root of your problems.



Lynn Grieger, RD, CDE, cPT (LynnGrieger.com)

Health food and fitness coach

Not everyone needs support in reaching their goals, but many people find they stay on track if they have someone to be accountable to. This person is preferably not a friend or family member; you want someone who can objectively help you. A coach, personal trainer, physician, nurse practitioner, even an online community can work well in this role.